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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Central Intelligence Bulletin

Secret

Nº 42

21 April 1972

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Approved For Release 2003/08/05 : CIA-RDP79T00975A021700060001-4

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No. 0096/72
21 April 1972

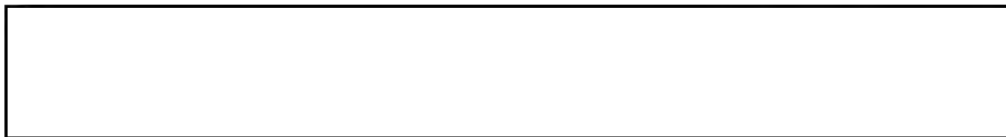
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CAMBODIA: Communist attacks over the past few days have closed the main road between Phnom Penh and Saigon.

Enemy units have assaulted a number of government positions along Route 1 between the Mekong River and the South Vietnamese border. Government forces apparently have taken substantial losses in the fighting, and the towns of Kompong Trabek, Prasaut, and Chipou reportedly have been occupied by the enemy. The latter two were controlled briefly by the Communists in the early weeks of the war in 1970. Communist gunners have also shelled the provincial capitals of Prey Veng and Svay Rieng, but no follow-up ground attacks have been reported.

Thus far, Phnom Penh has done little to regain the initiative and reopen the highway. The regional Cambodian commander has claimed that he must have additional troops before a clearing operation can be launched along Route 1. For the moment, he only plans to expand and clear a large zone around the South Vietnamese base at Neak Luong, on the Mekong's east bank. The identity and strength of the enemy units participating in the fighting in Prey Veng Province remain uncertain.

The increased enemy activity along Route 1 does not appear to signal the start of a broader country-wide offensive. It may represent an effort to gain control over sections of Route 1 in order to facilitate the southward flow of supplies to the South Vietnamese delta. With the deployment of almost all of their main force units to the South Vietnam border region, the Communists are not in a position to mount a serious threat to Phnom Penh or other Cambodian population centers west of the Mekong. Cutting Route 1 will have some effect on the movement of supplies from South Vietnam to Phnom Penh, but the bulk of the supplies now are delivered via the Mekong.

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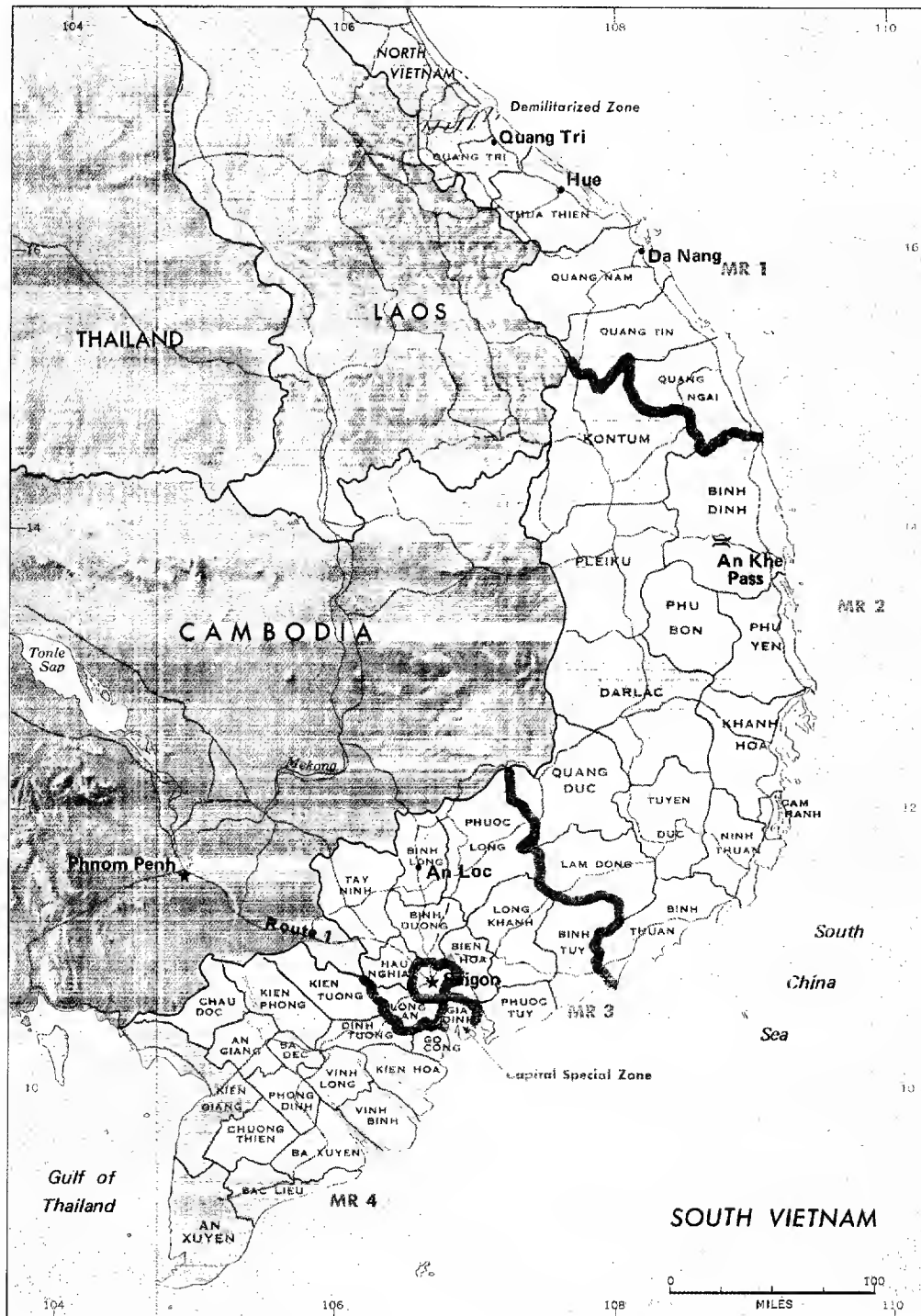
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SOUTH VIETNAM: There are signs that the Communist offensive may soon enter a critical phase on several fronts.

The situation at An Loc has taken a turn for the worse. South Vietnamese commanders who had been fairly optimistic about the battle there a few days ago are now in a gloomy mood. The Communists have carried out massive new shelling attacks against the city and its surrounding defenses, and enemy tank and infantry assaults again penetrated the northern part of the town on 19 April. South Vietnamese ammunition and medical supplies are running low, and some South Vietnamese officers feel they may not be able to hold out much longer without reinforcements.

Top government leaders in Saigon are also becoming concerned about the threat to the capital itself from the west. The basis for the worry evidently is the recent upsurge of enemy attacks along Route 1 in the Cambodian "Parrot's Beak" sector, a traditional avenue of approach to Saigon. This possibility may be what is keeping the South Vietnamese high command from hurrying more of the 21st Division northward to relieve An Loc.

In the Mekong Delta, government forces have gone on full alert in anticipation of a general increase in enemy attacks there.

In the central part of the country South Korean forces appear to be bogged down in their effort to clear the strategic An Khe Pass into the highlands. The pass has been closed by enemy forces for more than a week, and food and ammunition shortages in the Kontum-Pleiku area are becoming a significant problem. The commander of government forces in the region is considering sending more of his thinly spread forces to help the Koreans open the road.

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Farther north, stiff clashes continue west of Quang Tri City and Hue. In the coastal lowlands of the three southern provinces in Military Region 1, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units are continuing a damaging guerrilla campaign. They are striking hard at refugee resettlement centers, provincial towns, roads, and government regional force units.

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NORTH VIETNAM - USSR: Hanoi has stepped up its pressure on the Soviets to be more forthcoming in their public support for North Vietnam.

On 20 April, the North Vietnamese Fatherland Front repeated Hanoi's earlier appeal for more energetic backing from its primary allies. It was the fourth such call from the Vietnamese Communists since the offensive began. Almost simultaneously, an editorial in the party daily took a new and more explicit line on the question of Soviet military aid. The editorial deals with the notes exchanged by Moscow and Washington over the bombing of Haiphong last weekend, but it emphasizes the importance of Soviet material support for the current offensive. It quotes verbatim the US assertion that Moscow and other socialist countries must "share the responsibility" for the Communist offensive, and it strongly implies that Hanoi expects its socialist comrades in Moscow and elsewhere to continue to provide such support.

The editorial also contains North Vietnam's clearest admission since the offensive began that Soviet materiel has figured prominently in the action. "The great victories of the Vietnamese armed forces and people," it says, "are closely associated with the extremely valuable support and assistance of the socialist countries and civilized mankind."

So far the editorial has appeared only in local North Vietnamese media, doubtless out of deference to Moscow's current sensitivity on the aid issue. The editorial notifies Moscow, however, that the North Vietnamese, who clearly remain worried about the US-Soviet summit talks, are not going to pull their punches in order to protect Soviet interests in other spheres.

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The USSR probably will resist Hanoi's efforts to extract stronger public support for the current offensive. Moscow apparently regards the timing of the offensive as unfortunate and is concerned that matters of more import to the USSR--i.e., the Soviet-US summit and its European policy--will be jeopardized.

Moscow's priorities were evident in the line the Soviets took during President Podgorny's recent visit to Turkey. Deputy Foreign Minister Kuzentsov, who had accompanied Podgorny to Hanoi last October, professed ignorance about the actual situation on the ground but said the USSR could not condone increased US bombing raids over North Vietnam. During the visit, moreover, the Soviets stressed the importance the USSR attaches to its forthcoming meeting with the President and its hopes of making substantial progress in Soviet-US bilateral relations.

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NOTES

BURMA: The government's reorganization on 20 April represents another step toward "civilianization" of the ten-year-old military regime. The major change is the retirement from the armed forces of General Ne Win, who will continue to hold the prime ministership, and a number of other leading military officers who will continue to hold portfolios as civilians. In addition to the cosmetic change, the reorganization will also have the practical effect of forcing military officers seconded to the ministries either to give up their military rank or return to the army. The promotion of San Yu to general, making him the only officer in Burma to hold this rank, and his appointment to the Defense Ministry post formerly held by Ne Win further establishes him as Ne Win's heir apparent. Although Ne Win remains in top command, his uncertain health and his evident desire for less demanding duties may have spurred him to give San Yu a more prominent role. [REDACTED]

* * * *

GUYANA: The government may respond to a scheduled cutback in operations by Reynolds Guyana Mines, a US-owned firm, by initiating nationalization procedures. Prime Minister Burnham, who has been considering this for some time, has stated that the imminent reduction in output and employment in the face of a resurgence in Reynolds' operations in other countries could force him to start talks sooner than he had intended. In July 1971, Guyana nationalized with compensation the country's other bauxite producer, the Canadian-owned Demerara Bauxite Company, but moves against Reynolds had been postponed until marketing problems stemming from a worldwide bauxite surplus were resolved. [REDACTED]

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

The United States Intelligence Board on 20 April 1972 approved the following national intelligence estimate:

NIE 11-72 "Soviet Foreign Policies and the Outlook for US-Soviet Relations"

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